



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jim Doyle, Governor
Scott Hassett, Secretary

USDA Forest Product Laboratory
One Gifford Pinchot Drive, RM 130
Madison, Wisconsin 53726-2398
Telephone 608-231-9333
FAX 608-231-9592
TTY Access via relay - 711

Testimony for Public Hearing Committee on Economic Development, Job Creation, Family Prosperity and Housing –

Prepared by
Terry Mace
Forest Utilization and Marketing Specialist
DNR-Division of Forestry
One Gifford Pinchot Drive
Madison, WI 53726
Phone 608 231-9333
email: terry.mace@dnr.state.wi.us

Senate Bill -28

Relating to: exemption from construction standards for certain load-bearing dimension lumber. By Senators Breske, Schultz and Lassa; cosponsored by Representatives Hubler, Hahn, Hines, Albers, Mursau, Ballweg, Nygren and Seidel

The DNR supports Senate Bill 28.

This bill addresses the need for a way to allow the use of locally produced structural lumber in residential construction by a home owner. An example of this would be if an individual wanted to have some local timber custom sawn into lumber at a small sawmill to build their home. Technically this is not allowed currently unless the lumber is grade stamped. It is cost prohibitive for a small mill to get and maintain grade stamping authority. This situation would also arise for the landowner who wants to build a residence from the trees on his woodlot either by using his own small sawmill or contracting with a local mill.

The cost of lumber inspection for a small Wisconsin mill normally will preclude them from participating in a soft wood lumber grade stamp program. The most commonly used association in Wisconsin for softwood lumber grading is the Northeast Lumber Manufacturers Association, which then sub contracts with the Northern Softwood Lumber Bureau. This requires a trained softwood lumber grader on site and a fee of \$300 per month or .52 per thousand bf (board feet) of all softwood lumber shipment regardless of whether or not the lumber is grade stamped. The fee goes down to .40 per thousand bf when the production exceeds 10 million bf annually. For a mill cutting less than 600 thousand bf per year the cost would \$3,600 per year plus the cost of the lumber grader. The fee for a sawmill cutting 3 million bf per year would be around \$18,000 per year plus the cost of the lumber grader whose salaries could be in the range of \$35,000 to \$45,000 per year. This system does not allow for you to hire a contract grader to come in and grade just the lumber you want to have stamped.

In the Primary Wood Using Industry Directory maintained by the DNR division of forestry there are 278 sawmills listed of which 78 produce 100,000 bf or less per year. The directory does not include all of the local small sawmills owned by farmers and landowners for their own use. These are the people that this law is intended to help.

The legislation requires that the sawmill provide written certification that the lumber meets or exceeds the standards and it also allows the local building inspector to reject or require larger members if it is felt that the lumber does not meet the standards of grade stamped lumber.

This is a common sense bill that will help the local communities economically by allowing local product to be used.

SB 28 Feb. 2007

Comments from Joe Hovel, Partners in Forestry Cooperative

I have a 34 year career in alternative building construction and sustainable forest management in Wisconsin, and have striven to utilize local resources whenever practical. Currently, I also have the pleasure of chairing Partners in Forestry Co-op.

Senate Bill 28 is a common sense measure to encourage building inspectors to recognize the integrity of Wisconsin's forest resource. Our soft wood resource, scattered from the lower river valley through the central sands and in abundance in the Northwoods, is second to none. We should be proud of this resource and demonstrate this by promoting the use of sustainably harvested materials at the local level, enhancing local economies and conserving valuable fuel. These high quality products should be put to their BEST use.

It is cost and policy prohibitive to officially grade all construction lumber at the point of manufacture. By directing this resource to only a select few mills we impede the free market, devalue the product and encourage craftsmen to practice in bordering states. A small scale mill owner or builder, those not represented by large trade and lobby associations, should not be penalized for using framing and beam work in a rough sawn form, as is so common in the alternative building markets. When a landowner desires to construct his own home from his own resource harvested from his own woodland, we should encourage and help him.

A solution to the question of quality concerns could be to offer education to landowners and builders in the utilization of locally produced lumber. These short courses might cover grading for strength, sizing to insure structural integrity, and other relevant topics. I would suggest, as partners in sponsoring these sessions, the Departments of Natural Resources and Commerce, U W Extension, and private associations such as Partners in Forestry. Individuals with practical experience can also offer tremendous value to the process of education.

This Bill is important to the livelihood of several of our members, including myself, who build for the alternative market. I can only imagine how important it is to the balance of rural Wisconsin. For example, the Amish communities would greatly benefit, where craftsmen have a tradition of using the local resource.

This Bill also supports the Uniform Dwelling Code—page one, subchapter one, Comm.20.02 paragraph 5 states that "No part of this code is intended to prohibit or discourage the construction of innovative dwellingsor any other non conventional structure."

I will assure you that this concept can work. More than 25 years ago I was active as a young builder in Adams County. At that time Adams County had the foresight to adopt the UDC at a county level, and, more importantly, implement a staff of commonsense inspectors who had practical experience. They used discretion guided by their experience to oversee alternative construction, just as this Bill should encourage UDC inspectors to do. I enjoyed and much respected the relationship I had with them.

More recently, with the UDC now a part of all rural towns, we see private inspectors traveling great distance to contract with towns. Many of these inspectors have no attachment to the community they serve and may have no incentive to look out side of "conventional" building techniques. Senate Bill 28 may provide this incentive. As a bonus this bill strengthens local economies, encourages forest management, allows loggers and landowners to enjoy higher prices in the free market, conserves fuel, and encourages some of our very best self thinking craftsmen to produce their very best while adding to Wisconsin infrastructure. This bill has the potential to positively impact all, from the producer to the consumer.



Two buildings in northern Wisconsin built entirely of local timber resources

PARTNERS IN FORESTRY
1063 Baker Lake Road
Conover, WI 54519
(715) 479-8528